

HL 2020 Creative Writing Workshop – Why Write?

Division of English, Nanyang Technological University

Semester 2, AY 2019/2020

Day: TBA

Time: TBA

Location: TBA

Seminar Leader: Tash Aw

Contact Details: TBA

Office: TBA

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Giovanni's Room, James Baldwin
A Thousand Years of Good Prayers, Yiyun Li

SEMINAR STRUCTURE

The workshop will meet once a week, for three hours, and will divide into two parts, with a short break in the middle.

Throughout the semester, we will start to consider all aspects of creative writing, beginning with the simple question: Why write at all? Our motivations for writing influence the form, style and genre of our work. For example, why write fiction rather than memoir? Poetry or prose?

Our discussions will be based on work presented to the class by each of the students, as well as the texts in the required reading list together with any agreed upon as a group at the start of term.

Each student will typically present two pieces of work per semester – short stories, excerpts from novels, collections of poetry, memoir, works of non-fiction.

SEMINAR TOPICS to include:

- The truth in writing: fiction, non-fiction, memoir, poetry. Does it matter what form my writing takes?
- Voice. What do we mean by "Voice"? How do I find mine?
- Getting started: beginnings
- Structure: Beginnings, middles, endings (and does any of it matter?)
- The ethics of writing: the gaze of power
- A sense of place: the relationship between the writer and location

SEMINAR NOTES:

- Please be present, please have your writing and reading done, and please be on time. If you are more than 20 minutes late to class it will count as an absence.
- Computers are fine but please no texting or other digital distractions.
- Let me know as soon as possible if you have any disability or other issue that requires special accommodation in class. (Examples: you need to sit in a special position so you can see or hear well; you need to leave your phone on in case of a family emergency; you need to leave class early to attend a medical appointment, etc.)
- Please make sure you are familiar with the NTU plagiarism guidelines.

ASSESSMENT

All students will be assessed as follows:

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| 1) A sustained piece of creative writing of 1,500 to 2,500 words in total, which could be a short story, chapter from a novel (with synopsis) or memoir, journalism, script, poem (with commentary.) Some or all of this should already have been presented for critique in seminars. | 80% |
| 2) Participation in discussion; contribution of examples to topic under discussion, helpfulness in critiquing other students' work. | 20% |

ASSESSMENT NOTES:

- Please contact me immediately if you think you will have difficulty completing any of the requirements or submitting your work on time. Extensions are only granted in exceptional circumstances (for example, for medical reasons or in cases of family emergency), and documentation is required. However, support or resources may also be available to help you manage more minor difficulties, so please don't hesitate to contact me for an appointment to discuss anything that comes up.
- Please include the grading sheet from your syllabus with each submission.
- Assignments should be printed in a plain, legible 12-point font, either Times New Roman or Arial or similar. Double-spaced and page numbered.
- Assignments should be stapled.
- Assignments will be submitted in class, or placed in my assignment box in the English Department.

We will discuss workshop practice, critiquing other people's work, submission and feedback guidelines in the first seminar.